

Strong start for second phase of UCA's Cross-Border Vocational Education in Badakhshan, Afghanistan

The University of Central Asia's (UCA) School of Professional and Continuing Education (SPCE), Khorog launched the second phase of its Cross-Border Vocational Education in Badakhshan (CVEB II) with the assistance of USAID and the Aga Khan Foundation, USA. Under CVEB II, SPCE Khorog will administer 70 scholarships for Afghans to pursue basic and advanced courses in the areas of English, Information Technology and Accounting. Students receive intensive in-residence training at SPCE Khorog and also participate in cultural and extracurricular events, such as the Badakhshan Cultural Performance held in January last year. This performance will now be an annual event at SPCE Khorog. As the programme targets learners who are interested in becoming instructors, the advanced courses include elements of methodology. CVEB II will also award fourteen scholarships for Tajik learners from border districts of GBAO.



Students sitting for examinations in Faizabad to be admitted to UCA's Cross-Border Vocational Education (CVEB II) programme

On 15 October 2010, 570 prospective students sat for admission examinations in Faizabad, Afghanistan, to study at SPCE Khorog. Among those observing the exams was Dr Shah Walihulla Adeeb, Governor of Afghan Badakhshan. The Governor said he regarded the programme highly and that the entrance examination was very competitive.

Students traveled to Faizabad from throughout Afghan Badakhshan to apply for admissions and were excited by the opportunity to study in Khorog. Some students came from remote areas such as the Wakhan Corridor and Darwaz; one group of five students from Darwaz walked for a week to reach Faizabad.

“When I was called for the exam, I did not have anyone to accompany me to Faizabad, so I walked for two days to bring my brother with me from Ishkashim to go to Faizabad,” said Sadbarg, a student from the Teacher Training College in Shughnan.

Among the applicants, were also 30 graduates from last year’s CVEB programme, who credited the high calibre SPCE instructors and course materials – SPCE developed original curriculum and learning materials in Dari language for the Afghan students. The opportunity to earn international certification and travel abroad were also important motivating factors. Tamana, who completed the IT course, hopes she will be selected for the Microsoft Office Specialist programme. Before studying in Khorog, she was working as a teacher but only received high school education. Her future plan is to continue teaching, but now she is also pursuing university education.

Mohammad Zubair, 2011 CVEB English alumni, is currently applying for the English for Academic Purposes programme to further improve his English. But Mohammad also added that there were other benefits of studying Khorog, such as the opportunity to learn about Badakhshani culture on both sides of the border. “Being in Khorog, Tajiks get to know us better, as some of them have negative ideas about us. For example, one of them asked me how we get to Kabul if we want to travel. He thought that we were very backward and that there are no cars in Afghanistan so we travel by foot.” Mohammad said that he was pleased with his previous experience in Khorog and the quality of instruction. After completing his second CVEB programme, Mohammad hopes to serve his community by teaching.

CVEB II seeks to increase employment opportunities in Afghan and Tajik Badakhshan and improve cross-border cooperation between the two provinces. Since May 2011, SPCE graduated 89 Afghan learners as part of CVEB’s first phase and an initial alumni survey has demonstrated that within four months, 75 per cent of graduates were employed or are now continuing their education.

*The University of Central Asia (UCA) was founded in 2000.
The Presidents of Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, and Kazakhstan, and
His Highness the Aga Khan signed the International Treaty and Charter establishing
this secular and private University; ratified by the respective parliaments, and
registered with the United Nations.*

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